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PART OF A PATTERN

SOME THOUGHTS OF A WORKING ACTRESS

By ATHENE SEYLER

(Chairman of R.D.S. Council)

WHAT is it in the life of the theatre that I really like best? I think finally—on looking back over thirty-eight years' experience—the aspect of my work that I treasure most is the feeling of being part of a pattern—of meeting other people in the very subtle and stimulating way that the acting of a play demands—of being an intrinsic part of a whole and sharing an experience with members of a company. I believe all actors prize this special attribute of their work—though some of them may hardly recognize it. It must also be true of players of team games where a common object, excitement, and success or failure are shared in the actual performance. Actors are often thought of as being self-centred folk, bent on their own self-expression and given to jealousy and envy. But though undoubtedly there is sometimes this element in theatres, I am inclined to think it belonged more to the old days of actor-management and to the star-system at its height. Nowadays we have made the work of the producer much more important. The man who stands outside and directs the play regards the actors as a group and this gives a company a lively sense of being an entity, and emphasizes the interdependence of all its members. Achievement in the theatre is largely a matter of sensitive give and take between the actors and does indeed demand the exercise of the Christian virtues if it is to have genuine value. I know of no work that is more directly dependent for instance on Prudence—Temperance—Justice and Fortitude. Lack of forethought and preparation is always apparent even in the most inspirational actor, and is disastrous in production. Temperance is the essential of a good performance, saving one from the pitfalls of over- or under-playing, and giving the right place to one's own part without interfering with others. Justice or truth is the basis of clear thinking about a play, and how deeply does one need fortitude to help one through all the difficulties and disappointments of this most unexpected and elusive art!

One of the deep dangers of the profession of acting springs from the fact that an actor is at once the artist and the tools he works with. His looks, his personality, voice and manner, are to him what brush and canvas are to the painter, or instrument to the musician. It is therefore very easy to concentrate one's attention on oneself—to lay undue stress on one's own personal equipment and to rely on well-worn tricks and conscious expressions of "self".

This is certain death to creative art and has spoilt many a gifted actor. The only sure way to avoid it is to place one's work truly in relation to God. However small or however trivial and superficial it may seem in such a vast connection, I am assured that every night before one goes on the stage one is in need to offer up one's work for help, and for protection from false values—and indeed I believe that consciously or unconsciously all true artists do this. It may be as unrealized and as thoughtless as to be very near a superstition, or it may be a real instinctive dedication, but all artists are aware that they must trust finally not to themselves, but to their "luck", their "inspiration", or as some of us prefer to say—to God. And in proportion as we do this in truth so shall we be able to give of our best, and we shall be safeguarded from fear and fret.

R. H. Ward, well known as the author of "The Prodigal Son," "The Figure on the Cross" and other plays, and for his work with the Adelphi Players, contributes this provocative article (originally a lecture) which will be continued in our next two issues.

ELEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS DRAMA

By R. H. WARD

PART I

"I WOULD, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "that thou wert favourably disposed towards the drama and, as a necessary consequence, towards those who represent and produce it, for they are all instruments of great good to the state, placing before us at every step a mirror in which we may see vividly displayed what goes on in human life; nor is there any similitude that shows us in more life-like fashion what we are and what we must come to, than the play and the players."

Two main factors are concerned in dramatic representations: the stage and all engaged upon it, and the auditorium and every individual in it. Of these two, the latter is often given too little consideration. But a dramatic performance is a relationship between stage and auditorium, or it is nothing; if a play is not to be seen and heard, judged, appreciated and in the fullest sense contributed to, by its audience, it may as well be played with the curtain lowered; the art of the drama is not practised for art's sake, but for the sake of those on both sides of the footlights who take part in it.

I want later to make this matter of the relation between the stage and the auditorium very clear indeed, for it is one of supreme importance where religious drama is concerned. But first we shall be under the

necessity of coming to some understanding of a number of related matters, and initially of this rather difficult and arbitrary phrase, Religious Drama. There are many people, and I am one of them, who fail to see that there is any essential difference between religious drama and other sorts of drama. Provided that we exclude from the field of drama the lightest kind of entertainment, such as vaudeville, musical comedy and bedroom farces, all drama and indeed all art, is essentially religious. I believe we shall the better understand religious drama, and the better serve it, if we first grasp this fact. Religious drama has suffered from being pigeon-holed, from being regarded as a special subject having little or no connection with the drama as a whole and with art as a whole; from being left in the hands of men and women who, however sincerely religious, can in no sense be truly regarded as people of the theatre or as artists. Religious drama, let us be frank, is not at present in good case; it fails too often to appeal to the majority of folk; it attains no standards, literary or dramatic, which are comparable with those attained by the secular drama, whether amateur or professional. And the reason for these things lies, it seems to me, in the divorce which has been decreed, and popularly accepted, between religion and the arts.

I have found that a great many intelligent people are astonished by the suggestion that all art is essentially religious and that all drama is therefore essentially religious. Yet the historical evidence for my contention is alone overwhelming, while the psychological evidence is hardly less strong. I am no anthropologist, and this is not the place in which to try to relate primitive religion with the later religious expressions of the creative impulse, and rock-painting with its later artistic expressions. We can pass at once to more modern, yet still very distant, times and remind ourselves that the Greek drama—and here we are at once in the artistic field under discussion—grew out of religious ritual and the desire to vivify religious truths by means of the action, the “doing” which is drama. Later, the medieval Christian church, following its Master’s example—for what was the Last Supper but the dramatic representation of the sacrificial death and resurrection of the God-Man?—introduced the art of drama into its ritual; those officiating in the Easter services impersonated the people, earthly or heavenly, of the Gospel story. Later still the drama came out of the churches and into the market-place, whence its subject-matter moved from specifically religious stories from the Old and New Testaments towards the secular stories dramatized in the theatres of the Renaissance and of the centuries since. Here, of course, the apparent divorce—but is it so apparent when we consider such plays as Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* or Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*?—between religion and art begins to confuse us.

That it is no more than a confusion some examination of the psychological evidence for the essential unity of religion and the arts may help us to understand. Consider the kind of mind which has always been the artist’s, and the attitude of mind which artists have always brought to their work. “There is,” says Miss Sackville-West in *The Eagle and the Dove*, “a greater resemblance between the creative artist

and the mystic than between any other brands of human beings . . . the pursuit of beauty runs a parallel path to the pursuit of God." Certain examples are obvious here: men such as St. John of the Cross and William Blake were both mystics and poets, and in them the creative impulse seems to tend equally towards religion and art, in them these things become one and indivisible. But it is in fact unnecessary to make very profound examination of the nature of any considerable artist in order to discover that the impulse which drives him to write, paint or compose music is the same impulse which leads some men to the practice of the greatest art of all, that of living a life in the imitation of Christ; a few names suffice: Shakespeare, Keats, Wordsworth; Michaelangelo, El Greco, Constable; Bach, Beethoven, Wagner. There is a certain spiritual content in the works of these men which is the spiritual content of religion. There shines very clearly through the work of all of them a direct contact with the wells of the spirit, a certain sense of indwelling mystery, a certain perception of spiritual and natural laws hidden from most of us, a steady reference, whatever the outward terms of expression, to a single inward reality which is the basis of art and of religion. And here we might cite a wise word of the greatest of modern psychologists, himself an artist and mystic as well as a scientist, Carl Jung: "Who . . ." he says, "speaks in primordial images, speaks as with a thousand tongues, he grips and overpowers and at the same time he elevates that which he treats out of the individual and transitory into the sphere of the eternal, he exalts the personal lot to the lot of man and therewith he releases in us too all those helpful forces that have ever enabled humanity to rescue itself from whatever distress and to live through even the longest night. . . . That is the secret of the artist's effect." We shall return to this quotation later, but for the moment the important thing to notice is that the "artist speaks in primordial images" and that it is in these images—such for instance, as that of the eternal death and resurrection of the godhead—that religion also speaks.

Then, the attitude of the artist to his work is of considerable significance to our subject, for in it we see that, for the artist, his work is his religion, in no superficial but in an utterly real sense. Artists are the servants, whatever the cost to themselves, of a divine imperative; and all artists, like all men of religion, are engaged upon the same purpose, the mediation of the truth to mankind; the divine imperative drives them to speak the truth for the salvation of the world.

Perhaps this phrase, for the salvation of the world, will make clear my purpose in speaking at some length of the relation of art and religion and the reason why I can but regard that relation as an important element of religious drama. Religious drama is essentially no different from other kinds of drama and other kinds of art; it demands the same vision of divine law, the same expression of "primordial images", the same passionate devotion, as all artists and all men of God, in one way or another, have felt to be at the core of their lives. But here we come to an important point: art and religion are matters of purity and integrity, and purity and integrity, in any

profound sense of those words, have not notoriously characterized religious drama. Let me, by putting the negative aspect of the question first, try to explain what I mean. I have in my time watched and read a great many religious plays. Few of them have been of a kind to move the deeper centres of my being, few of them have given me any incentive to live a better life, many of them have disgusted me as an artist, bored me as a human being, and given me the impression of belittling, rather than glorifying, the beauty and grandeur of the personality and life of Jesus, of the truths inherent in the Christian religion and of the nature and history of the Church. In a word, far from being of service to religion and to men, they have done both man and religion a disservice. This, if any of you share my opinion and experience, you will agree to be a deplorable condition of affairs. I have often asked myself why religious drama so often tends to bring about precisely those effects—those of boredom, belittlement and total lack of inspiration—which are *not* required. The answer lies, I think, in its mediocrity.

The statement that a great part of religious drama as we know it is lacking in purity and integrity logically follows. One of the qualities of a great work of art is its newness; while another is its oldness. There is something old, indeed eternal, in a work of art because, essentially speaking, there is nothing new under the sun; because the truth, at a certain profound level, is extraordinarily simple; there is nothing new in the way of a theme—as opposed to a plot, a story—for artist or priest to invent; all the cardinal themes were invented by God, and probably long before He invented us.

On the other hand, there is something new about a work of art because there is no end to the ways of saying the old truths; the more superficial layers of the human psyche hold an infinite diversity of possible expressions, of possible approaches to the truth, of possible manifestations of it in word and action. Art and religion which do not grasp these two facts—that of the oneness of profound truth and that of the diversity of its possible expressions on the surface—will lack purity and integrity. The truth, the primordial image, belongs to all of us. Jung would say that it dwells in a “collective unconscious” in which we all share and of which we can all be made at least dimly aware; but we shall not be made interested in that truth and in our part in it and its significance for ourselves and for our own lives unless the way in which it is conveyed to us is in itself interesting, unless the statement of it is a new one that takes our attention and sets us to work to descend with the preacher or the dramatist to that level of the psyche on which the truth lies. Much religious drama falls into mediocrity because it fails in this way; it has not envisaged clearly the truth to be mediated to its audience, and it has not sought conscientiously for new and arresting, but not necessarily sensational or elaborate, means of mediating it. Such drama is neither good religion nor good art, for it lacks purity of impulse and integrity of expression.

(To be continued)

JOINING IN

WE publish here a letter which gave us pleasure: joining in is exactly what we want people to do and we hope many more will do so.

January 8th, 1947.

To the Secretary, R.D.S.

DEAR SIR,

Having borrowed Vol. I, No. 1 of *Christian Drama* from a friend, I enclose 2s. 4d. for my subscription for the current year. . . . A few lines on page 17 prompt me to tell you how you have hit the nail on its head.*; I made my first venture in religious drama a year ago; I liked acting, had done some years ago professionally. Having been a Christian for only some five years, I felt a bit strange and "out of it" among the older hands. Last month our Guild did performances of *Holy Night* in two local churches. The Producer asked me to play "Our Lady"; with some reluctance, aware of my unsuitability for such a part, I agreed—and am told that the result was "beautiful"; now I am *not*, by any means, nor am I a great actress, but a power beyond my own took hold of me—it was quite a living force to me, and an answer to my prayers. I could feel the audiences being held by the reality of the whole thing, and was more fully "aware" of positive spiritual guidance, almost of a Presence beside me, through the two months rehearsals and the performances, than I have ever been before. It was exhausting, but wonderful. Having always felt a little strange, an onlooker trying to "gate crash", in church, this has made me feel completely "at-home" in church, in a way I did not previously realize was possible. Please forgive a stranger for rambling on like this—the intimate, personal style of your magazine is as much to blame as I! It seems to invite one to "join in".

* You cannot act in a religious play without risking a religious experience.

The following letter raises a point of such vital importance to Religious Drama that we have asked the writer to contribute a full-length article to the next issue of *Christian Drama* in which he will discuss some of the theological implications of liturgical drama.

SIR,

Mr. Fairclough's interesting review of the Lichfield play rouses again one of the standing controversies of religious drama whether our Lord should, or should not, be impersonated on the stage. For some time this question has been marked out in my mind for full discussion but, like most academic questions in these days of too little leisure for thought, has hitherto been laid aside undetermined. A few days ago, however, it was forced upon me in very concrete form, and I find myself no longer able to shelve it.

The occasion was a very unpretentious Nativity Play, given by the children of a Sunday School, in church. The play itself consisted of the essential Nativity scenes, first read from the Gospels by a reader, then enacted in silence; the children having for the most part simply worked up in rehearsal their own interpretation of the words of Scripture. This was successfully, and most pleasingly, done. Only, perhaps, a slight uneasiness at the very "human" behaviour of the Virgin—fondling the Bambino just as the player had seen her own baby brother fondled, with the happy pride of a young mother—should have warned me that a theological problem was about to be posited. During these scenes, of course, the Infant was represented by a doll. In a finale, however, the Child Jesus was introduced, impersonated by a small boy of six.

Perhaps the audience misunderstood the Vicar's directions. Perhaps its members were carried away spontaneously by the genuine appeal of the scene. I do not know. But this is what happened. Mary was seated at top of the steps from the nave to the chancel. At her knee stood the Child. When the whole cast had assembled below the steps, everyone knelt down, as though worshipping the Child. All this was perhaps harmless enough—a tableau to direct our worship towards Him who was once a child in Nazareth. But, as the cast knelt, so did the audience. And there, in church, facing the Altar in the posture of common worship, we all knelt while the Child solemnly made the sign of the Cross—knelt just as a congregation might kneel at the end of the Eucharist to receive the Blessing from the priest.

It was at this point that the theological problem exploded in my mind. I felt myself utterly and bewilderingly shocked; and I hurried out of church as quickly as I could to try to arrange my thoughts. Here, you see, you had what the act of worship had transmuted from an audience to a congregation—to the Body of Christ—focussing its attention upon a child impersonator. *What* does such a focussing imply? It seemed, and still seems, to me that it must imply worship. It is all very well for our minds to be directed to the wonder of the Incarnation by a charming representation of its story. It may (though I am not quite so sure) be all very well for the cast kneeling round the representation of the Child to idealize for us the worship of the shepherds and kings long ago. All this lies arguably within the bounds of legitimate representation—bringing facts or truths home to us through the medium of drama. But once the audience is on its knees and the Child's hand traces out a Sacramental Act, the limits of dramatic representation are reached and overrun. Unless the audience has no knowledge of what it is doing; or unless the congregation has no conception of the meaning of worship—that which is due to God alone is being misdirected. While the play is on, the audience must remain seated, and receptive—or it will cease to be an audience, and what it does will become either tom-foolery or grim—very grim—earnest.

FAR AND NEAR

"News from a foreign country came."

CHRISTMAS IN GERMANY

By DIANA CARROLL

Rows of darkly-clothed, intent people pack the nave of the church and the gallery above, and a faint light shines up on the face of a man in the pulpit who reads from the Bible the story of Christmas. They are Germans.

In the chancel, before the high gold reredos flanked by two fir-trees, the scenes of this Christmas story are being acted by figures in vivid colours. The choir massed at the side sings familiar carols. They are British.

At the end of the play the Mother Mary with the Child in her arms stands up before the kneeling Kings and Shepherds and offers Him with one embracing gesture to all those who are present, while they sing: "O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord."

Then the Lutheran Bishop from his place on the steps bids the audience give thanks that Christians can share the truths of Christmas in spite of the differences of language, and we join in saying the Lord's Prayer in our own tongues.

This was one of the performances of the Nativity play given this Christmas at Bad Oeynhausen, at Lübbecke, and at Hamburg, in the British zone of Germany. The initiative came from the Y.W.C.A., but the casts and choirs and stage staffs were from all sections of the British community, and were of all ranks and denominations. All three Marys were of the Control Commission; the narrators from the British Army; one Joseph was a N.A.A.F.I. manager and another a Toc H. warden. Kings and Shepherds included a padre, several Tommies, and two small German boys. The choirs had representatives of all three Services, the Red Cross and the Control Commission. At Bad Oeynhausen the setting was the garrison church; at Lübbecke an ex-Gasthaus, now the Toc H. Club; at Hamburg the hall of a bombed-out church. In all, eight performances of the plays were given to British and German audiences, including one in Minden Church by the company from Bad Oeynhausen. To achieve these, against the rival claims of leaves in Paris, Brussels and Copenhagen, of postings, parties, illness and demobilization, was no light task. We record with gratitude some of those who bore the responsibility of the productions. From the Y.W.C.A.—Miss Fox and Mrs. Mason at Bad Oeynhausen, Mrs. Hussey and Miss Mackenzie at Hamburg, Mrs. Hilton Weeks at Lübbecke, and with them members of Toc H., the Church Army, Wesley House, the Garrison theatres; Chaplains and their assistants, and Welfare Officers, who contributed so much. The performances amply justified their faith and hard work.

Many German groups gave their own "Krippenspiele". I watched the rehearsals taken by a young deaconess in Hamburg with her children's class. Their costumes were the simplest improvisations—but

there was a haunting quality in their singing of "Es ist ein Ros entsprungen" in parts, and great dignity in the final procession of the cast led by the "Star-singer" bearing her star on a long staff.

At the Burckhardtshaus, Berlin—headquarters of the German Y.W.C.A.—the students gave their play in singing, mime and speech. Again, the costumes were of the simplest and there was no help from the setting, but there was immense sincerity, and much beauty in both song and speech.

In the Deaconess house at Detmold, during the week after Christmas, over two hundred deaconesses gathered from their scattered parishes to hold their "Weihnachtsfeier" at the Motherhouse. Here there was no action, but the Crib was the visual focus, built up between tall Christmas trees on a platform of moss. Up the green slope kings, shepherds and flocks of sheep of many sizes made their pilgrimage to the Child. The readers included four young novices each carrying an advent wreath with one to four candles, who told the message of their particular Advent Sunday, leading up to the drama of Christmas. The choir sang a long programme of chorales and hymns, generally unaccompanied, sometimes accompanied by organ or flute, always entirely by heart. The candlelight from the trees shone softly on the stiff, immaculately starched headdresses of choir and audience seated in rows at the long tables. (Most of the starch is made from horse-chestnuts.) Over all, as in many German houses, a great three-dimensional star sheds its yellow radiance.

"A child in a foul stable
Where the beasts feed and foam,
Only where He was homeless
Are you and I at home."

It was well for Germans and British alike to acknowledge this at a time when many are homeless, and others far from their homes.

STUDENTS IN AFRICA

From a letter sent to us by Miss T. Barton of C.M.S.

BISHOP TUCKER COLLEGE, Mukono, Uganda, sixteen miles from Kampala, is responsible not only for the training of all the future leaders of the native Anglican Church, but also for the training of English-speaking (Primary) teachers, who are drawn from different tribes in the Diocese. The only theological college in the Diocese, it is run as one combined institution with a united staff, and although this scheme has its disadvantages, it is felt that the young Primary teachers in training gain considerably from living, working and worshipping together with the older and more mature men in the theological department, most of whom have been schoolmasters before.

At our college staff meeting at the beginning of the academic year we decided to introduce a new venture—a weekly Play Reading, voluntary, for English-speaking students, to be followed by Compline in Luganda for everyone, before retiring to bed.

We are not sure how helpful the Play Readings were to the students, but they certainly were of value to the combined staffs of the College and the different schools on the hill who took part. Miss Sayers' broadcast plays, *The Man Born to be King*, was the book we decided to read, and once a week during the term a different play was read, the African chaplain taking the part of Christ each time, and reading the words with great dignity and reverence. The other members of the staff kept to their respective parts as far as possible for the whole series of plays. The readers sat in the gallery at the back of the chapel, while the students sat in their ordinary seats in the nave. Each play was read through and carefully rehearsed by the staff before reading it in the chapel. We all found that it brought great unity among us, and the words of the plays brought home to each one of us in a new and living way the reality of the Gospel stories—how applicable they are to everyday life to-day, and how human the disciples were. It was a real inspiration and refreshment to read and study the plays of this famous author in this way, and we all felt that we had got to know our Saviour and His teaching in a more real and intimate way than ever before.

Correspondent, R. E. HOPKINS.

PROFESSIONAL THEATRE

THE PILGRIM PLAYERS

The Family Reunion closed on February 1st after 105 performances of a production which did much to assure this fine play its permanent place on our stage. Mr. Eliot has succeeded in finding a form of verse into which modern dialogue seems to fall naturally both at the conversational and at the philosophical level. He has dramatized—if not with complete success, at least more profoundly than anyone before him—the characteristic spiritual agony of our age, and suggested a Christian solution to it without employing any of the well-worn Christian terminology. This sometimes involves him in obscurity: after all, the struggle itself is mainly one to penetrate obscurity! But it never invalidates the dramatic nature of the experience, to which hundreds of spectators, some frankly not understanding it, testified at the Mercury. Alan Wheatley gave a sensitive and skilful performance as Harry, while Catherine Lacey and Henrietta Watson brought memorable beauties to Agatha and Amy. The team-work of the family was good enough to bring the audience right into a Wishwood which Stella Mary Pearce beautifully prepared to receive them.

Murder in the Cathedral followed—a revival prepared to benefit the Canterbury Festival Fund and then shown for two weeks at the Mercury. This great play seems simple after ten years, but none the less great: and the revival was packed in bitter weather. It is being shown to thousands of London schoolchildren at Collins' Music Hall during school hours in March.

The Poets' Theatre Guild, "to bring poetry back to its place in the theatre," was inaugurated on February 9th with a dramatic reading

by Dame Sybil Thorndike. This band of supporters already numbers 300 with a dozen life-members. Its half-guinea subscription covers not only discussions and some price reductions, but also the entry to trial "rehearsal readings" of new poetic plays, submitted for future production, by the company.

NEWS OF THE OTHERS

STAR TURNS

(1) **Tavistock.**

The Tavistock Deanery Players, operating with two complete casts, have undertaken, between January 18th and March 27th, no fewer than fourteen performances each in a different place of Lesbia Scott's play *Then Will She Return*. The Bishop of Exeter writes that he welcomes warmly "the fact that the Play is an original one written in the Deanery and that the players are all resident in the district", and we have had some amusing notes from the author and producer of the play on some of the difficulties and comicalities that have enlivened the production. We regret very much that we could not reproduce the photographs sent, for they show what beautiful effects can be secured by the use of plastic material. Characteristically, the author included photographs of the back-views of the Images: plastic is so expensive that they could only afford to dress the front view and the exquisite, touching, or dignified robed figures are revealed by the "rear elevation" as held together with tape and string over stout tweed suits and woollen pullovers!

Other more serious points worth noting are: the principals understudy the minor parts; the Company meets in the parish church for prayers an hour before the show is due to begin; the local incumbent is invited to take these, and any children or members of the local choir who are helping are asked to come too. The actors carry with them one triple flat, six double ones, an archway and a window flat. Each panel is 8×3 ft.; the hinged ones fold two ways; they are covered with hessian and painted cream on one side and green on the other. The Company has bought complete fluorescent lighting equipment and are paying themselves back a little at a time. The two thankless roles of prompter and wardrobe mistress are undertaken by one anonymous heroine.

Then Will She Return is shortly to be published by S.P.C.K. for R.D.S., and we think it will surely help to meet the great need for well-constructed imaginative plays about the Church to-day. It was written, and toured, with the object of supporting the Bishop's Appeal—not primarily with the idea of raising money (though proceeds are being given to the fund)—but by stimulating audiences to a deeper realization of the glories and necessities of the Church and their responsibilities towards her. "The play's the thing" wherein we'll catch the conscience of the unthinking.

(2) Camberley.

Elmhurst is the name of a preparatory school for girls in Camberley; further education is given there to older girls who intend stage or ballet careers. It is not surprising, therefore, that the scholars should indulge in the exercise of drama from time to time; what is remarkable is that each year the school's work is epitomized in an act of dedication and worship whereby the skill and devotion of the children and their teachers is offered, in dramatic form, to God.

The presentation last Christmas-tide, entitled *Ye Serve the Lord Christ*, was designed and directed by the Headmistress, Mrs. H. I. Mortimer, for performance in the school chapel, and churches to which the performers were invited. The play sets forth the Incarnation as an ever-present reality calling for contemporary response, and achieved its effect through stylized production of great care and beauty. There were words—well chosen and splendidly spoken—and an accompaniment of sung and instrumental music, but it was the miming and movement that gave the performance its outstanding quality. The angels, in their several orders and fine colours, performed their offices of heraldry, guardianship and adoration with joy, dignity and a beautiful observance of symmetry in space and time; shepherds and Magi, offering their peculiar honours, reminded us that the whole of our lives must be offered to the redeeming Word made Flesh; finally, a crowd of stricken and terrified children from all nations found their refuge and fulfilment with the Holy Family.

From the sixty odd performers there was some excellent individual mime-acting, but never the least trace of showing-off: from the presentation of Our Lady herself—full of grace indeed—to that of the smallest page or displaced person, all seemed to conform to a discipline gladly accepted for this service of God. Here, one felt, were people together making something really lovely which was worth doing for its own sake, because their love of their art was part of their love for the Author and Finisher of the Faith they so beautifully expressed.

Allowing for the professional qualifications of the producer and her assistants, the fact remains that the result could only have been achieved through prayer and hard work on the part of all concerned. Those who were privileged to attend at Camberley, Addiscombe or Bloomsbury will agree that this production, artistically and religiously compelling, provided an inspiring example of the use of Drama in Church.

(3) Sheffield.

Pamela Keily, Religious Drama Adviser to the Association of Christian Communities, writes:—

“Things have been static during the autumn season, when the Adviser was in London, having been lent to the *Joyous Pageant* as assistant producer. Since her return to Sheffield in January, the time has been largely occupied with planning the production of a new play by R. H. Ward, called *The Second Murderer*. This play was commissioned by the Bishop of Sheffield as part of the ‘Church in Action Campaign’ (the movement under which the Diocese of Sheffield is raising funds for the Church).

"The idea of this is to encourage an imaginative and more original endeavour than a straightforward large-scale Pageant, as first considered by the Campaign. The author has been encouraged to express criticism of the Church. The Church has accepted that criticism to the extent of the Precentor of the Cathedral himself taking the part of a priest in the play who is shown up distinctly unfavourably! The emphasis throughout is on the importance of 'being' rather than 'doing'—and even though in conjunction with a campaign to raise funds, subscriptions and organizations are shown to be of only secondary importance to the living out of the Christian Faith.

"Climatic conditions have been distinctly unfavourable, and the technical complexity of the production is of a kind that makes only one full rehearsal a week a nightmare for any producer. Collecting a caste from all over the city, means that free-time cannot possibly always coincide. But the thing is having to be worked out like a jig-saw puzzle, to be fitted together for performance in March.

"Meanwhile, plans for beyond Easter are gradually formulating along more parochial lines. Only one parish effort is in progress at present—but it is perhaps worth mentioning that the Adviser was invited to Huddersfield as a result of the Summer School in order to encourage the start of an endeavour similar to that in Sheffield. She is also booked for conferences in Durham and Newcastle in April—where the incorporation of religious drama into evangelism is felt to be a matter of importance."

All the Rest.

Liverpool. The Bishop of Liverpool's Advisory Committee on Religious Drama (Secretary, the Rev. Francis Glendenning) has been operating in the Liverpool Diocese for the past eight months. The need for its work is apparent, for over forty parishes have sought advice from the Secretary in that time. Four important developments in the Committee's work are:—

1. A Drama School to be held in St. Edmund's College, Liverpool, from February 13th–15th, 1947.*

2. A Diocesan Christian Drama Festival, to be held in May, 1947.

3. The desire of the Committee to include among its members people with specialist knowledge, e.g. Mr. John Williams, A.R.I.B.A., who is already advising some parishes on stage-construction and lighting schemes, and Mrs. Jessica Morris (more well known as Jessica Dunning, through her regular broadcasts), who is an ex-member of the Sheffield Rep.

4. The conviction that the Church must encourage the production of good "straight theatre" plays in the parishes. The Secretary has drawn up a catalogue of some fifty of the best contemporary plays, for which many parishes have asked.

* The Drama School just held was a great success. Sixty students from all over the diocese came on three days. Miss Doreen Woodcock and Miss Carina Robins were the principal lecturers. Three stations of *The Way of the Cross* were rehearsed as part of the practical work. On the last evening the Bishop came and gave his blessing on the work of Religious Drama.

Correspondent, Rev. F. J. GLENDENNING.

Romford. Since formation in November, 1945, the Church of the Good Shepherd, Romford, Youth Club have produced *The Flight* (H. M. Richards), *The Man Who Denied* at Passiontide, 1946, and *Encounter at Bethlehem*; the two latter plays written by the Vicar, the Rev. C. V. Porter, M.A.

Correspondent, S. J. GOATER.

Birstall. Birstall Drama Society, Leicester, have successfully produced John Drinkwater's *A Man's House* for four performances at the Church Hall, which received very favourable criticism from the British Drama League Adjudicator, and drew large and appreciative audiences. The adjudicator praised both choice of "a worthwhile play" and the high standard of dramatic achievement.

Correspondent, E. A. RUDKIN.

King's Langley. Drama Christi presented André Obey's *Noah* at Church House, King's Langley, for five performances. A spectator writes:—

"A good production . . . imaginative grouping and stylized movement . . . the whole company a fine team. Great pains had been taken with lighting and well worth the effort. Noah himself brought out the fundamental strength and pathos of the character, though his humour seemed at times a trifle laboured; a sensitive performance that would have been even more telling if the actor had not also been carrying the burden of his stimulating production. An exactly right and unforced emphasis made the religious element the life of this lovely play."

During Lent and Passiontide Drama Christi are touring St. Albans Diocese with Gheon's *Way of the Cross*. Performances will also be given in Cuddesdon College, Oxford, Luton parish church, Addiscombe parish church, and, on Maundy Thursday, in Southwark Cathedral.

Birmingham. St. Martin's Drama group produced *Kings of Judea*, the first play of Dorothy L. Sayers' series "The Man Born to be King".

Correspondent, MARGUERITE TAYLOR.

Redhill. Redhill Congregational Church held a Christmas Drama Service, giving a presentation of *The Story of Christmas in Mime*, by E. Martin Browne, performed by the Dramatic Society and the Church Choir with solos by Miss Monica M. Diamond and accompanied by the organist, Mr. W. S. Furlong.

London. University College, London, Dramatic Society presented (for the eighteenth year) a group of Laurence Housman's *Little Plays of St. Francis*, produced by Laurence Cahill. This year's selection included the best-known Juniper plays: a wise choice, as Juniper was the mainstay of his fellows from the acting point of view. The Francis missed the joy of the saint, but gave otherwise a thoughtful interpretation. The production was good and sometimes very good, and supporting parts were keenly and intelligently played.

From **Yeovil** come thanks for the suggestion of *The Story of Christmas in Mime*, by E. Martin Browne, which drew "good reports from many people".

Correspondent, BETTY PATTEN.

"It do . . ."

From **Peterborough** (Elton Church) comes an account of another mimed version of the Christmas Story, played both for children and for ex-prisoners of war. The ex-prisoners from a neighbouring P.O.W. camp sang unaccompanied carols. The comment from one spectator, not a churchman, was: "It do make you feel there's something in it."

Correspondent, BARBARA MURRAY.

Halesworth. The Congregational Church presented *The Animals' Gifts*, by Freda Collins. This was followed by a spoken chorus, "The Sweepers of Canterbury" from *Murder in the Cathedral*; the second half of the programme was *The Vision at the Inn*, by Susan Buchan.

Correspondent, Rev. I. E. MOORE.

Bickley. The Bickley and Widmore Guild of Players presented a carol-play, *The Cradle of the King*, in the Church Hall, with an unusually beautiful selection of music.

Correspondent, A. STRUDWICK.

From Cresswell Vicarage, **Ellington**, Morpeth, comes news that the drama group have done C. H. Hemmings' *The Silver Bag* and toured it to four neighbouring parishes; they are hoping to do *John Whose Surname was Mark* in the spring.

Correspondent, Rev. T. G. RIDLEY.

Southampton. The Wayfarers Dramatic Society had to postpone their production of *Jupiter Laughs* (A. J. Cronin) last December. The play, produced by Cicely Deverill, is to be given on March 13th, 14th and 15th.

At the moment these players, like so many others, are suffering from shortage of man-power (accent on man). They are determined to produce Sierra's *Kingdom of God* in the spring of 1948.

Correspondent, DORA B. GRAVES.

Edinburgh. The Wayfarers was founded in February of this year. It is a Youth Fellowship Company in the Diocese of Edinburgh (Episcopal Church Youth Offices, 13 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh 3), and the age limit is fourteen to thirty years. The average age of those belonging is nineteen to twenty years. Since its inception it has had two productions. In Passion Week and Holy Week it toured six churches and halls of varying size in the Diocese of Edinburgh (two other engagements were refused on account of the short time at our disposal), with *This Is The Victory*, a little play of events in our Lord's Life and Passion, by Myra Moloney.

In December of this year it put on in St. Peter's Church, Lutton Place, in co-operation with the Organist and Choir, a performance of M. O. Pelton's *Gladdening Light*. This was played in a darkened church, the chancel alone being lighted, and the lighting effects were in the charge of one of the members of the company.

In addition a Demonstration rehearsal of one of the scenes of Philip Lamb's *Go Down Moses* was performed before the Episcopal Sunday School Teachers' Union in the Edinburgh Diocese. It is hoped to put on the play in its entirety sometime in the New Year.

Correspondent, Miss N. CALLENDER.

Tetbury. The Vicar, the Rev. P. Thomas, writes:—

"*The Beginning of the Way* was presented in church three times, once on Christmas Eve immediately before the Midnight Communion. It was quite inspiring to see the various characters still in costume at the Communion Rail as they all stayed for the service which followed the play. The second performance was on the Friday after Christmas, when surrounding villages came in to join with us. And the third presentation was on the first Sunday after Christmas, when the play took the place of the sermon at Evensong. Some clergy closed their churches and brought their congregations in buses to join our service and then witness the play."

Marston Green. The Vicar writes: "It is good to see what others are doing. You might like to know what we have accomplished so far.

- (1) The Oberufer Christmas Plays: i.e. *The Paradise Play*, *Shepherds' Play* and *Kings' Play*. (Music not available at present for publication.)
- (2) *Everyman*.
- (3) *The Three Maries* (a modern version).
- (4) *The Fight with the Dragon* (a Michaelmas Play).

"We have built our own stage and furniture and made our own costumes all out of odds and ends. We have more or less taught each other and never had expert tuition."

Correspondent, Rev. H. R. SPOULE.

Great Shelford. A production of G. M. Sierra's *Holy Night*, which owed direct inspiration to the R.D.S. Sheffield School, was given in Great Shelford Church, Cambridge, to packed audiences in Advent of 1946.

The local paper said: "The acting of the play was simple and of a high standard; the dresses and the lighting in the lovely chancel arch, which formed the proscenium, achieved great beauty and the whole performance was both moving and inspiring. It should certainly be performed where great numbers can see it and learn its message."

A special performance was given to P.O.W. men, when the last speech of the Virgin was translated into German, which had a deeply touching and dramatic effect.

Correspondent, THEODORA CHADWICK.

Epsom. The Thirty Club Drama group (St. Martin's Church) produced Masefield's *The Coming of Christ* for five performances in various churches in the neighbourhood, a collection being taken for the "Save Europe Now" Fund. This enterprising Youth Club followed up with a production in February of Anne Ridler's *Cain*.

Correspondent, EDWARD THOMPSON.

Wateringbury. (As reported by the *South-Eastern Gazette*.)

"A large congregation saw in Wateringbury Parish Church on Sunday evening, 5th January, an intensely moving presentation of *The Nativity* by an anonymous group of amateur actors, The Franciscan Players.

"A collection was taken for the Bishop of Rochester's Great Appeal.

"The programme (already seen in East Malling and in St. Peter's Church, Maidstone) consisted of a mimed and spoken version of the Nativity linked to a production of a one-act play, *The First Crib*, by carols sung by the combined choirs of St. Peter's, Maidstone, and Wateringbury Parish Church, and a choral speech extract from T. S. Eliot's *The Rock*.

"It was, by any standards, a magnificent production.

"It is significant that so soon after the war a group of players has had the courage to stage in three parishes an elaborate religious production. It is to be hoped that the Franciscan Players will not be allowed to break up.

"They have made a brilliant start in the revival of religious drama in Kent's parish churches. It is a beginning too rich with promise to abandon."

The producer, Marie Jefferson, warmly recommends *The First Crib* as an unusual and very effective Nativity play.

Correspondent, MRS. M. J. BIRT.

Poole and Parkstone. Following the Week-end Training School in September, this Centre prepared a Nativity Play, in which, under an experienced producer from the Centre, members of several congregations and groups took part. The play was taken on tour through the district during January, being presented in seven different churches and halls, both Anglican and Free Church. The play given was one written by a former Vicar of St. Peter's, Parkstone, and originally produced there, slightly adapted to suit the varied conditions of a mobile production. A large number of people saw this, the first play presented "in unison" by our Centre, and from impressions gathered we have reason to believe that it was a dramatic event which fulfilled the intention of its promoters in worship and in witness.

A Christmas Play was also presented at Skinner Street Congregational Church, Poole, a Christmas Mime by St. Aldhelm's Sunday School, and a Christmas Play, *The Animals' Gifts*, by Freda Collins, by the children of the House of St. Francis (Mission district). The Youth Group at St. James's, Poole, also gave a Nativity Play, and took it up to St. Osmund's Hall, at Parkstone.

Correspondent, Miss H. M. RICHARDS.

Harlesden, N.W. 10. Young people of St. Matthew's parish gave two performances of Sierra's *Holy Night* in their church on January 15th and 17th. The production was much appreciated and proved a deep experience to the players. They are now preparing to tackle *Tobias and the Angel*.
Correspondent, Rev. J. CRISP.

Bethnal Green. A performance of *Pilgrim's Progress* will be given at 8 o'clock on April 10th at the York Hall (Public Baths), Bethnal Green, by members of the St. Margaret's House Settlement. The play will be produced by Barbara Murray.
Correspondent, Miss B. MURRAY.

Farnborough. On the three Wednesdays before Christmas, 1946, a Pageant Play entitled *The Word and the World* was presented in St. Mark's Parish Church, Farnborough. The Bishop's Challenge Committee of the parish promoted the play in which were combined the efforts of literally hundreds of different people in the town. The script was compiled in Farnborough; Miss D. Orchard of Cove agreed to be producer; lighting, costumes, staging, music—all these (together with the actors) were found locally.

St. Albans. Torchbearers performed to Salvation Army Youth Work Officers from twenty-six countries, gathered for intensive training and picked as leaders. French, Danish and Dutch delegates told how during the occupation they had done Drama work among the young people secretly.
Correspondent, A. F. GILLIARD.

Community House, Glasgow. The *Living Newspaper* (see last *Christian Drama*) is being performed all over the place. We are in fact beginning to move out of Glasgow, receiving enthusiastic if at times controversial reception. We are doing a short and simple play for a Missionary Rally . . . the first of a series of short sketches dealing with missionary drama.
Correspondent, O. WILKINSON.

Chester-le-Street. The Epiphany play, *The Flight*, by H. M. Richards, was given in the Parish Church on an open stage without scenery or curtains by the Church Players, and was well received by audiences on January 14th and 15th.
Correspondent, Rev. W. GREGORY.

Blackburn. The B.A.R.D.S. have changed their plans and are now preparing to present an adapted version of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* in the Y.M.C.A. Hall, Blackburn, on March 6th and 8th. The play will be preceded by Gordon Daviot's one-acter *The Mother of Masé*.
Correspondent, Mrs. V. SCARBOROUGH.

Welwyn Garden City. The Drama Group of St. Francis' Church presented the *Cuddesdon Nativity* play in the church at Christmas. Miss Robins reports: "An excellent choice of play and the church gives great opportunities. Though they have much to learn about the art of church production, these players have made a good beginning." This group tackles "difficult" plays in regular play-readings, and only occasionally produces.
Correspondent, Rev. S. A. JACKSON.

Poplar. Miss Robins reports: "*York Nativity* at All Saints' Church, Poplar, was a delight. Here is a parish which treats Drama seriously and is prepared to work at it. They have established a tradition of Mediaeval plays, and both players and people obviously enjoy their naive simplicity and humour. We were thoroughly entertained and led to worship the Christ Child. A Mediaeval Passion play is being given in the church from April 28th to May 2nd at 8 p.m."

Correspondent, Rev. EASTAUGH.

Deptford. St. Paul's, Deptford, are giving *The Way of the Cross*, by Henri Gheon, in Passion and Holy Weeks. Miss Robins is producing. Dates: March 27th, 8 p.m. prompt; Sunday, March 30th, Evensong, 6.30 p.m., followed by the play at 7 p.m.; also Good Friday, at 8 p.m.

Correspondent, Rev. J. BULLOCK-FLINT.

Soho. St. Anne's Church House are presenting *The Marvellous History of St. Bernard*, by Henri Gheon (translated by Sir Barry Jackson), in St. Thomas' Church, Regent Street, nightly at 7.30 p.m., from 20th February to 8th March inclusive (except Mondays). The play will be produced by Hallam Fordham and Jonathan Mayne; special music composed by Geoffrey Bush will be under the direction of Michael Thomas. This church is well-known in London as the host of various companies of players: it is good to see its own parish drama group given the stage and the task of maintaining the high standards achieved by some of its accomplished visitors.

Correspondent, J. SETH-SMITH.

Salfords. Enterprise and hard work are the watchwords of the Salfords (Redhill) R.D. Group. At Christmas time they had the pluck to present, for its first production ever, Kenneth M. King's *The Stars Roll By* (recently published for R.D.S. by S.P.C.K.). A youthful cast attacked the play with confidence and enthusiasm; unavoidably cramped for space, they overcame their difficulties well, and the humour of the play was given its due. Audiences were impressed by the freshness and topicality of this unusual Nativity play. A surprise visit to a matinee performance by the author was much appreciated by the players. For Passiontide the group are preparing Drinkwater's *A Man's House*.

Correspondent, Rev. H. H. A. ANDERSON.

Portsmouth. The Linden players are adventurous and versatile. Making a virtue of necessity, their producer wrote a Christmas play, *A Lullaby Too Rough*, for his cast of four. The audience, we are told, re-acted variously but definitely. "One woman walked out, saying it was blasphemous; a matelot (quite worldly) found it 'most moving. You had me near to tears.'" There is some real life stirring in this small group.

Correspondent, S. C. MILLER.

Edgbaston. Theological students of the Queen's College, Birmingham, gave an interesting performance on December 7th of *In the Day of Judgement*, a short vivid play about Cranmer by Rev. R. P. C. Hanson, Vice-Principal of the College. Originally written to commemorate the quarter-centenary of the English Litany, it was produced on this occasion by the author in the College Chapel. Considering that nearly all the players were new to acting a very creditable result was achieved. Costumes and off-stage singing were most effective. The play itself has since been recommended for publication and should be widely used.

Combined Operation. The Anglican, Congregational and Methodist churches of Witham, Essex, are uniting to present *Nicodemus*, Andrew Young's fine verse play, in All Saints' Church on Good Friday. Production will be directed by Rev. Jason S. Wright of the Congregational Union Drama Panel.

Etc. Other productions at Christmas time by groups from whom we have received no details included:

The Beginning of the Way: Sansome Walk R.D.S., Worcester; Westbury Park Players, Bristol; Muswell Hill D.S.; St. Paul's Players, South Harrow; Newland Church, Hull; St. Laurence Church, Morecambe; Matson Church, Gloucester; and groups at Cheshunt, Belper, Harrow, Nelson and Ipswich.

The Flight: St. Mark's, Watford; Y.W.C.A., Cardiff; and groups at Worthing, Ipswich and Leeds.

Nativity: Newington Church Players, Hull; and at Rainhill.

Light is Come: Bristol Cathedral Players; *That Night*: Fixby, Huddersfield.

Joyful Mysteries: Orpington and Ipswich.

Glad Tidings: Redruth.

Poverty: Fairhaven Methodist Players, Lytham St. Annes.

St. Joan: Brighton Training College.

The Story of Christmas in Mime: Broughton Church Group, Broughton-in-Furness.

At the Well of Bethlehem: Spetisbury, Dorset.

R.D.S. NEWS AND NOTICES

The Society's Name and Objects.

The response to the referendum sent to all members with the last number of *Christian Drama* was disappointing in that barely a fifth of our membership felt sufficiently concerned to return voting papers. The result, however, showed a clear majority in favour of Alternative B: that is, keeping the name unchanged and altering the objects to include Christian aims.

The voting was distributed as follows:—

For no change in name or objects	...	...	...	11
For Alternative A	...	...	...	50
For Alternative B	...	...	...	88

Total number of votes received 149

Acting upon the decision of the General Meeting of 12th November to regard this ballot as final, the Executive Committee has altered the wording of the Constitution accordingly. Paragraphs 1 and 2 therefore now read:—

1. The name of the Society shall be the Religious Drama Society.

2. The objects of the Society shall be to foster the art of drama as a means of religious expression and to assist the production of plays which explore and interpret the Christian view of life.

Council.

The following are the names of those members elected by the General Meeting of November 12th to serve on the Council (the Society's Governing Body) for 1947, under the chairmanship of Miss Athene Seyler.

Re-elected.

Canon Eric Abbott (King's College, London).
 Rev. Eric Barber (Edinburgh).
 Edwin Barker, Esq. (Y.M.C.A.).
 Miss F. Barton (Salisbury).
 Miss T. Barton (C.M.S.).
 Oliver Bell, Esq. (British Film Institute).
 Rodney Bennett, Esq. (author and producer, Devon).
 Dr. S. E. J. Best (Doncaster).
 Mrs. L. J. Bowyer (Derbyshire).
 Rt. Rev. the Lord Bishop of Bristol.
 Dr. Dorothy Brock (Mary Datchelor Girls' School, London).
 E. Martin Browne, Esq. (Hon. Director).
 Mrs. E. Martin Browne (authoress, actress, London).
 Miss W. Bruce-Williams.
 Rev. P. Bryant (Chaplain, Harrow School).
 Miss Diana Carroll (Y.W.C.A.).
 Miss M. C. Cobbey (Essex Drama Adviser).
 L. T. Crainford, Esq. (Arts Council).
 Miss Creagh-Henry (authoress).
 Miss Margaret Cropper (authoress, Westmorland).

Rev. Noel Davey (Editorial Secretary, S.P.C.K.).
 Miss C. J. Deverill (Southampton).
 Mrs. Donaghy (Durham).
 Miss Margaret Douglas (London).
 Christopher Fry (author).
 John S. Gough, Esq. (Lebanon).
 Lt.-Col. R. C. Grant, D.S.O. (Oxford).
 Miss Pamela Keily (R.D. Adviser, Sheffield).
 Mrs. C. Knyvett (York, G.F.S.).
 Rev. P. J. Lamb (St. John's College, York).
 Rev. Eric Loveday (St. Martin's, London).
 Miss Audrey Machin (Coventry).
 Miss Frances Mackenzie (B.D.L.).
 Herbert J. Malden, Esq. (Theatre Manager, London).
 Miss Dorothy Marten (authoress).
 Mrs. Fred Miller (Arts Theatre, Bridgewater).
 Rev. Rex. Parkin (R.D. Adviser, St. Albans Diocese).
 H. J. Prickett, Esq. (Kent College, Canterbury).
 Mrs. Barbara Pritchard (Purley).
 Miss Zoe Proctor (authoress).
 Mrs. Nora Ratcliffe (authoress, producer).
 Rev. Douglas Remington (Kent).

Elected—continued.

Miss C. M. De Reyes (Citizen House, Bath).
 Miss H. M. Richards (authoress, Parkstone).
 Rev. K. Riches (Cuddesdon College).
 Canon R. R. Roseveare (Sheffield).
 Canon D. M. Salmon (London).
 Mrs. A. Sander (London).
 Canon Eric Southam (Guildford).
 Miss Ruth Spalding (Rock Theatre Company).
 Rev. R. N. Spivey (Wesley Church, Cambridge).

It was decided also to ask the National Association of Girls' Clubs and the National Association of Boys' Clubs each to appoint a representative to serve on the Council.

Co-opted by previous Council in May, 1946, and re-elected.

E. W. Bishop, Esq. (Financial Secretary, S.P.C.K.).
 Miss Freda Collins (authoress).
 Mrs. Helen Lamb (York).
 Malcolm Saville, Esq. (St. Albans).
 Mrs. Martin Shaw (Blythburgh).

Elected.

Miss Dorothy Carr (Durham R.D. Fellowship).
 Rev. Michael Clarke (London Diocese R.D. Committee).
 Father Denis Marsh, S.S.F.

Miss K. Stewart (Board of Education Youth Service).
 Miss Mona Swann (authoress).
 Miss Honoria Taylor (Beaconsfield).
 Rev. Cyril J. Thomas (Methodist Youth Department).
 John H. L. Trustram, Esq. (Hon. Treasurer).
 Miss O. Willis (Newbury).
 Miss C. Logan Wright (London).
 Rev. M. Sims-Williams (S.C.M.).

Rev. J. L. Mortimer (Sacrist, Southwark Cathedral).
 Rev. G. R. Myers, B.D. (Methodist Divine and author).
 Miss Jessie Powell (authoress).
 Rev. Hugh Ross-Williamson (priest, author).
 R. H. Ward, Esq. (author, producer, actor).
 Oliver Wilkinson, Esq. (Drama Director, Community House, Glasgow).
 Rev. F. H. Wiseman (Congregational minister and author).
 Rev. Jason S. Wright (Congregational Union Drama Panel).

Membership.

Since we went to press with the first number of *Christian Drama* in November we have welcomed 90 new members (Group or Individual)—or almost exactly one every day. Among the National, Regional or Diocesan bodies newly affiliated are: H.Q., Methodist Youth Department (Rev. D. A. Griffiths), Southwell Diocesan Education Committee (L. B. Hawkes, Esq.), "Kerek en Wereld," Driebergen, Holland (E. M. van Diffelen), Down Dromore and Connor Religious Drama Committee (Major R. Garratt), Oxford and District Sunday School Union (L. B. Hawkes, Esq.), and Canterbury Diocesan Education Committee (Miss M. H. Hazell).

Numbers of course are not everything, but they provide at least a yardstick by which the extent of the Society's influence can be estimated. We are growing steadily and there are now over 850 of us; but there must be quite three or four times this number of potential supporters in the country who would value membership with us. Please help to make the Society more widely known and encourage others to join, so that its work can deepen and expand. With existing members' help we believe we could double our membership in the next eighteen months.

May we also ask groups to remember the R.D.S. when disposing of surplus profits from successful performances? A member has suggested that some groups might fix a percentage of net takings to be given to the Society. Any financial help—whether from this source or another—will be most welcome.

Summer School.

The Society is arranging a Summer School of Religious Drama for one week, Saturday, August 30th, to Saturday, September 6th, 1947, at University House, BIRMINGHAM.

The course is primarily intended for producers, but also for everyone interested in the relationship of Drama to Religion in theatre, church or hall, whether they are dramatists, teachers or youth club leaders, etc.

For *Resident Staff* we hope to have:—

Two producers:

Pamela Keily, Religious Drama Adviser to Sheffield Association of Christian Communities, and another.

One expert in Mime and Movement: Doreen Woodcock, Fellow and Vice-President, Institute of Mime.

One expert in Speech: Clive Sansom, Examiner for London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, Editor of *Speech of our Time*.

As *Visiting Lecturers* the following have agreed to come, engagements permitting:—

Eric Newton, Art Critic of the *Sunday Times*, and his wife, Stella Mary Pearce, Decor designer for all T. S. Eliot's plays.

The Rev. Noel Davey, Editorial Secretary to S.P.C.K.

Other lecturers will be announced later.

Resident chaplains, Anglican and Free Church, will conduct daily services.

There will be accommodation for about 135 resident students. Fee (including board): Seven and a half guineas; reduction of one guinea for R.D.S. members and those belonging to groups affiliated to the R.D.S. Those who wish to obtain a grant towards fees and expenses are advised to apply to their local Education Authority.

University House is a comfortable well-furnished building with a good garden. Winterbourne, the annexe, is a lovely old house and has a beautiful water garden leading down to a wood.

The situation is a pleasant one, standing high up, three miles outside the city, half an hour on a frequent tram service from the station. For lectures and rehearsals we shall have the use of King Edward Sixth Schools, adjoining University House, with a fine hall and well-equipped stage.

Last year's school at Sheffield, under Pamela Keily's management, fired our enthusiasm and laid firm foundations on which we hope to build. We look to our members and readers of *Christian Drama* to support this summer's School and make it known throughout the country.

Application forms and full details will shortly be available from the Organizer:—

Miss Carina Robins, R.D.S. Office, S.P.C.K. House, Northumberland Avenue, London, W.C. 2, to whom all enquiries should be addressed.

PLEASE BOOK EARLY.

Travelling Adviser's Notes.

The winter's work has brought me into touch with many new centres of activity, and everywhere I find keenness, friendliness and a desire to learn more.

Regional Activities.

It is good to see organizations being formed, whether in dioceses, districts or towns, and I hope that many will eventually have a Religious Drama Adviser.

Leicester Diocesan Drama Committee is planning a Religious Drama Convention for May 17th, at which I have been asked to lecture and adjudicate.

Bournemouth and Lincoln have each formed committees representing all the churches. Bournemouth hopes to arrange a week-end school, and The Lincoln Christian Drama Guild is having a course of weekly drama classes to lead into the production of a play.

Schools.

Portsmouth Methodist Circuit arranged a week-end school in November, at which Miss Constance Herbert and I were the lecturers. Though small in numbers there was real enthusiasm.

The One Day School at Chelmsford in November was excellently organized under the Congregational Union Drama Panel (The Rev. Jason S. Wright), and over one hundred students came. Miss Muriel Judd and I were the lecturers.

Mention of Liverpool Diocese Week-End School held in February is made elsewhere.

Knutsford, Cheshire, is planning a One Day School for May 10th.

Southwark Diocese have asked the Society to arrange a Holiday School of Christian Drama for Sunday School teachers and youth leaders, etc., at Woodlands, Caterham-on-the-Hill, Surrey, June 2nd to 9th. The lecturers will be Miss Freda Collins, the Rev. J. L. Mortimer and myself. There will probably be vacancies for a few people outside the diocese, so will anyone interested apply for particulars to Miss F. M. Brearey, 25 Victoria Street, South Block, S.W. 1.

Salisbury Religious Drama Fellowship is arranging a School at Lyme Regis, August 15th to 22nd. Particulars from Miss F. M. Barton, Rectory Cottage, West Dean, Salisbury.

St. Albans.

We heartily welcome the recent appointment of Rev. Rex Parkin as Religious Drama Adviser to the Diocese of St. Albans. Besides directing "Drama Christi" from King's Langley, he has many times undertaken lectures and demonstrations at our request and last autumn visited Eire and Northern Ireland as the Society's representative.

The London Office.

The Society has been very fortunate in securing the services of Miss K. Bainbridge-Bell as Librarian. It had been clear for some time that the duties of Secretary and Librarian could not long remain embodied in one person—so rapidly is the Society growing. Miss Bainbridge-Bell began her new work in January and we are very happy to have her with us.

Will members please note that all communications concerning the Library, the hire of books and sets of books, and advice about the choice of play, should now be addressed to Miss Bainbridge-Bell. All other matters including those relating to manuscript plays, publication, membership, production, general advice, etc., should continue to be referred to the Secretary, Mr. T. G. Bartholomew.

Members who have visited our little office will appreciate how grateful we are to S.P.C.K., who, although themselves restricted in office space, have very kindly given us the use of a much larger room (next-door to the other one), where our increased staff can comfortably swing proverbial cats. For this relief much thanks.

Enlargement, however, brings difficulties as well as blessings; we need more furniture. Our chairs underwent surgical treatment last year but, although still handsome to look at, they are the victims of senile decay and distressing symptoms become increasingly apparent. Thus, the other day an elderly clergyman who had sat down in high spirits to discuss raising the level of religious drama in his parish was utterly downcast at the abrupt realization that his attitude had been based on inadequate assumptions. . . . So may we appeal, quite literally, for more solid support from our members? We don't like our visitors to be floored in this way, especially as the floor itself badly needs a new covering. Any carpets or rugs—Chinese, Persian, Axminster, we're not fussy—will be most welcome. We also want another desk and a show table. The desk is for Miss Bainbridge-Bell, who is at present working wonders at a small wash-hand-stand very kindly loaned to us by the owner who wants it back as soon as possible. The ornamental table is required for the display of books and literature, and (temporarily, we hope) for the concealment of the largest hole in the carpet. . . . Yes, we know we are optimists, but—any offers, please?

Library.

The interim Recommended List mentioned in our last issue is now available and copies may be obtained on application. Price 2/6, or 2/9 post free.

The following additions have been made to the Library:—

NEWLY PUBLISHED PLAYS

<i>Adventures in Burma.</i>	FREDA COLLINS.	S.P.G.
<i>The Figure on the Cross.</i>	R. H. WARD.	R.D.S./S.P.C.K.
<i>Five Christian Plays.</i>	FREDA COLLINS.	R.D.S./S.P.C.K.
<i>Go Down Moses</i> (2nd edition).	P. J. LAMB.	R.D.S./S.P.C.K.
<i>The Lonely Place</i> (3 short plays)	VERA ARLETT.	R.D.S./S.P.C.K.
(Particulars of the above are given in the Recommended List.)		
<i>The Centurion's Servant.</i>	FRANK BUCHANAN.	French.
A one-act verse play: simple setting. Cast 4 m. Fee 15/-, recommended.		

The Light-Bearers.

J. A. APPLETON.

S.P.C.K.

A dramatized service in which representatives of the congregation take an active part. First performed in a Norfolk village with a population of 375. Capable of adaptation for larger parishes and other localities.

The Redeeming Feature.

L. P. BARNETT.

Epworth Press.

The effect of a visiting team of Christian Commandos on a family in an industrial town. August, 1944, and Flying Bombs. Cast 3 m, 6 w., 1 boy.

The Obedient Rebel.

F. H. WISEMAN.

Independent Press.

Three acts. A straightforward and much needed play on Jeremiah. Simple settings. All male cast. Recommended to Youth and Boys' Clubs.

REPRINTS OR REPLACEMENTS

A Change for the Worse

JAMES BRIDIE.

Constable.

(from *Tedious and Brief*).

A short play written for the Pilgrim Players.

BOOKS OF REFERENCE AND GENERAL INTEREST

An Actor Prepares.

STANISLAVSKY.

Geoffrey Bles.

The Art of Mime.

IRENE MAWER.

Methuen & Co.

Dictionary of the Bible.

Ed. J. HASTINGS.

T. & T. CLARK.

Drama Omnibus.

ERIC NEWTON.

French.

Dressing the Play.

National Association of Girls' Clubs.

My Life in the Theatre.

STANISLAVSKY.

Geoffrey Bles.

Noises Off.

FRANK NAPIER.

Muller.

The Old Testament in Art.

W. SHAW SPARROW.

Hodder &

Stoughton.

The Producer and the Players.

EDWARD LEWIS.

Allen and Unwin.

Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition.

BETHELL.

Staples.

Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge.

RICHMOND NOBLE.

S.P.C.K.

The Use of the Drama.

HARLEY GRANVILLE-

BARKER.

Sidgwick & Jackson.

The following plays in typescript have been included in the Library and are recommended:—

According to the Scriptures, by ELIZABETH HEWARD. A chorus of 4 (2 m., 2 w.) and reader re-live the events leading to the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. They find comfort in the Psalms and in the new understanding which has come to them with the Resurrection, and recognize the inevitable fulfilment of the prophets. Suitable for Church productions.

The Lily and the Crown, compiled by ELIZABETH HEWARD from the Coventry Nativity Play, the Wakefield Crucifixion and the Cornish Mystery of *The Three Maries*. Simple setting for Church or Hall. Cast of 12. If necessary can be played by 10 w. and 2 m.

The White Hart, by H. M. RICHARDS, based on the Dorset tradition of the slaying of the White Hart during the reign of Henry III. The setting—the Pleasaunce at Puckseye, with a garden Calvary in the background—makes it suitable for outdoor presentation. West Country players should also be interested in another play by the same author: *Living Stones: An Episode in the Life of St. Aldhelm*. Cast 5 m., 3 w. Could be presented out of doors.

Women of the Passion, by J. G. DAVIES, consists of a devotional Prologue and Epilogue and six scenes in Jerusalem, ending with the garden of Joseph of Arimathea on Easter morning. Suitable for Church or Hall. Cast 4 m. (2 non-speaking), 9 w.

Many of the plays in the Library are becoming dishevelled and worn through constant use. We should be very grateful if any members would offer to repair the books occasionally. Perhaps some of those who did similar work for Hospital Libraries during the war would be kind enough to help the R.D.S. Library now.

We should be glad to know if anyone has plays which are now out of print (either single copies or sets), which they would be willing to sell or give. We are specially anxious to obtain copies of:—

The Story of Christmas in Mime, E. MARTIN BROWNE; *Good Friday*, JOHN MASEFIELD; *Nicodemus*, ANDREW YOUNG; *Christ Crucified*, MARGARET CROPPER; *Mary Magdalen*, MAETERLINK; *Resurrection*, W. B. YATES; *X At Oberammergau*, HUMBERT WOLFE.

To be Published.

The following have been recommended and accepted for publication:—

<i>In the Day of Judgement.</i>	RICHARD HANSON.	{ Manuscripts available in Library, particulars in Recommended List.
<i>Sensation on Budleigh Beacon.</i>	E. R. HOUGHAM.	
<i>Then Will She Arise.</i>	LESBIA SCOTT.	
<i>Castle of Perseverance.</i>	{ Fifteenth-century moralities arranged by IWA LANGENTELS.	
<i>Impatient Poverty.</i>		
<i>Invitation to Dance.</i>	JOYCE BIDDELL.	
<i>The Army of the King.</i>	DOROTHEA FLOWER and ERICA YEO.	

Bohemian Touch.

The play begins with a procession, on the first Sunday in Advent.

First goes the star, carried by the precentor; next the Christmas Tree hung with ribbands and apples, drawn by the rest of the players singing sacred songs. The performers greet the sun, the moon, the stars, the emperor and the magistracy "in the name of all the herbs that grow in earth"—they greet next the constellation of Charles' Wain the Soul-car of German heathen mythology. After this chanted greeting the hall is entered.

There is neither stage nor scenery. A bench indicates Bethlehem; a chair Jerusalem. A choir sings between each scene and an angel chants prologue and epilogue. Joseph carries a sort of straw umbrella, which represents the roof of the stable, and the star is affixed to an "elongater". The Devil carries a cow's horn and a whip and is dressed in black and has a hideous mask with horns on his head and a fox's tail attached to his waist.

The three shepherds lie asleep on the floor and the angel in long boots walks over their breasts, singing, to show that he is communicating his message to them in a dream.

The Host of the Inn wears Hungarian costume—fur cap, a hussar coat, frogged waistcoat and hessian boots. The scribes wear paper frilled collars, paper mitres, white nightshirts and top boots. It is impossible not to think of Bottom and his company.

Introduction by S. BARING GOULD, to Carols for Use in Church.

Prize Competition.

None of the entries submitted was considered worthy of acceptance and it has, therefore, been decided to re-open the competition for a further period. The Society offers a prize of Two Guineas for an acceptable design for a motif to be used on all R.D.S. publications, including *Christian Drama*. The design should be suitable for reproduction in various sizes and for printing in either two colour or black and white. Designs should reach this office not later than June 30th, 1947, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope for the return of unsuccessful entries.